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Fifty-third Session

Official Records

21st plenary meeting
Wednesday, 30 September 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by The Honourable Edison James, Prime Minister, Minister for External Affairs, Legal Affairs and Labour of the Commonwealth of Dominica

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Assembly will first hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for External Affairs, Legal Affairs and Labour of the Commonwealth of Dominica.

The Honourable Edison James, Prime Minister, Minister for External Affairs, Legal Affairs and Labour of the Commonwealth of Dominica was escorted to the rostrum.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister, Minister for External Affairs, Legal Affairs and Labour of the Commonwealth of Dominica, His Excellency the Honourable Edison C. James, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. James (Dominica): It is my distinct honour and privilege to address this body once again. In doing so, may I take the opportunity to offer, on behalf of the Commonwealth of Dominica, sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. My thanks are also extended to Ambassador Udovenko, who so ably guided the fifty-second session.

Our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has been indefatigable in his efforts to bring about peace in various countries and regions. To him we express our thanks and congratulations. Last year, I extended an invitation to him to visit the Caribbean. He has not yet done so. The invitation remains open.

The Caribbean region continues to demonstrate its commitment to the democratic process. Since we last met in this forum the people of several of our States, within the provisions of the existing rules, freely expressed their will as to who should lead them into the new millennium.

Our assertion that democracy is alive and well is not a reflection that all is well in the region. The Charter of this Organization imposes an obligation on all its Members to work for the peace, security and economic and social development of all peoples of the world. As we seek to discharge that obligation, it behoves us to be constantly cognizant of those factors and events which would militate against our success. Some of these are natural and unavoidable; others are man-made and regrettable.

The Caribbean was only a few days ago severely impacted upon by one such natural disaster, Hurricane Georges. The damage inflicted was extensive, particularly

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in St. Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. On their behalf, I urge this body to generously respond to their expressed need for assistance in the reconstruction work. But the Charter obligations of the United Nations call for more than an ad hoc response arrangement. We must first recognize the acute vulnerability of small States to natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, volcanoes, earthquakes and so on, and their intrinsic limitations in mitigating and responding to them.

What is being proposed, therefore, is the establishment of a disaster reconstruction fund under the auspices of the United Nations, the resources of which would be available for quick and effective response to the needs of small States post disaster. And there is still more that must be done. Global warming and the greenhouse effect must be halted.

There are on the agenda of this fifty-third session of the General Assembly many matters of profound importance to the Commonwealth of Dominica and the Caribbean Community as a whole. These include macroeconomic policy questions on trade and development; the revitalization of the economic growth and development of developing countries; the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty; the protection of the global climate for present and future generations of mankind; and cooperation between the United Nations and the Caribbean Community.

That cooperation is nowhere more necessary than in our fight to maintain the integrity of the market for our bananas. Our fight is against some very powerful members of this very United Nations, which seem determined to derail our democracy, upset our efforts to eradicate poverty and undermine the peace and security of our region.

The people of the Commonwealth of Dominica and the people of the Caribbean Community look to the United Nations to intervene on their behalf. The people of the Commonwealth of Dominica and the Caribbean Community are firm in their conviction that globalization and trade liberalization cannot be allowed to result in the marginalization and economic disintegration of small developing States.

We seek a level playing field on which our people can engage meaningfully in trade and development, rather than be for ever subjected to the aid-and-dependency syndrome. Our expressed desire to hold on to our banana industry, which has served us well, in no way reflects any misunderstanding of the reality of the current trade and economic environment.

We in the Commonwealth of Dominica are actively engaged in the diversification of our economy, involving the agricultural, tourism and service sectors. We have made progress towards improving air access to our country and are providing increased opportunities for our children to receive secondary and tertiary education.

We consider the recent naming of one of our national parks, Morne Trois Pitons, as a World Heritage site to be a resounding statement of our commitment to the preservation and effective utilization of our environment.

It is a source of comfort to us that all this has been achieved in an environment of social and political stability. We must, however, sound the warning bells, as we note with great foreboding the practice by some of deporting to our countries hardened criminals who have learned and practised their trade in their adopted homelands for several decades. In like manner, the unwarranted disruption and dismantling of families through inhumane immigration laws requires the attention of this Organization.

I respectfully submit that in all our deliberations and actions, as indeed in every aspect of human endeavour, the aspirations and legitimate expectations of the people must be central. The 21.5 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan aspire to be represented in this body. They have a legitimate expectation that their country, a founding Member of the United Nations, should have its membership restored. We cannot but lend them our support. Ours must be a policy of inclusion.

A cursory look at our agenda reveals 21 items dealing with the financing of United Nations peacekeeping or observer missions, all associated with war, threats of war, "ethnic cleansing", terrorism and the like. This suggests that although much has been achieved, much more must be done. We must focus our attention on the preservation of peace and security, thereby reducing the need for the restoration of peace and security.

There should be no compromise in the fight against terrorism, whether it be in Kenya, Tanzania or Northern Ireland. We note and are glad for the encouraging signs emanating from the Middle East. We should take our cue from the famous British politician who said "To jaw-jaw

is better than war-war", and seek to settle our disputes peacefully in the spirit of our Charter.

By the time this fifty-third session of the General Assembly comes to a close, many speeches will have been delivered from this podium, articulate, substantive speeches, delivered by men and women who together hold and wield enormous power.

The peoples of the world have heard us talk. But is that all they want from us? I submit that the answer is a resounding no. They want action. An agenda that includes 165 items suggests that much work lies ahead of us. Yet I propose one additional task: that the Secretary-General and his able team of professionals subject all of our speeches to detailed scrutiny and analysis and, in keeping with the directive of the Summit of the Americas, let us "put words into deeds".

In this way, we will give the lie to those critics who claim this place is only a talk shop, and demonstrate to them that it is indeed an action station.

The Commonwealth of Dominica and the Caribbean Community hold dearly to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We are firmly committed to working with all Members and nations to bring about an improved quality of life for all the peoples of this world.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs, Legal Affairs and Labour of the Commonwealth of Dominica for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Edison James, Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs, Legal Affairs and Labour of the Commonwealth of Dominica, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, The Honourable Seymour Mullings.

Mr. Mullings (Jamaica): Let me begin by joining previous speakers in extending my personal congratulations and those of my delegation to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. You assume the leadership of this Assembly at a time when the global agenda demands much of us all. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Jamaican delegation as you guide the work of this Assembly to what I am confident will be a successful conclusion.

I wish also to thank Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine for the effective manner in which he discharged his responsibilities as President of the Assembly during his tenure.

The Secretary-General deserves our praise for his outstanding leadership of the Organization during the past year. I congratulate him in particular on the successes achieved through the quiet methods of preventive diplomacy which he employed on sensitive issues affecting international peace and security.

We welcome his report, which contains a thoughtful overview of the complex challenges facing the international community, and we applaud the institutional reforms thus far introduced, which have sought to bring greater coherence and efficiency to the work of the United Nations. We also endorse the reorganization of the work programme, which brings renewed focus to the initiatives of central importance to the United Nations: those in the areas of peace and security, development cooperation, social development and humanitarian affairs.

We consider it essential that the membership of the United Nations support the efforts of the Secretary-General in the implementation of this programme of work. Such support should be extended not only by endorsement of the range of activities being undertaken in fulfilment of our mandates, but also through the regular commitment of resources for their execution.

Our presence here is an acknowledgement of the universality of many of the problems we face, and our membership in this Organization is a demonstration of our conviction that these problems are best solved through collective action. This should lead us to reaffirm our support for multilateralism and our respect for its processes through the timely payment, without preconditions, of our assessed contributions to the respective United Nations bodies.

In recent years, the international community has witnessed a disturbing increase in the number of conflicts within and between States. The stable peace anticipated at the end of the cold war has been elusive. Instead, we have watched as efforts to resolve ongoing regional disputes unravel because of obduracy, mistrust and hostility. We have watched as intolerance and hatred have

divided communities and fuelled conflicts across the continents. We are concerned that despite the intervention of the Secretary-General, his envoys and the membership of the United Nations, there is still no real progress towards peace in a number of long-standing disputes.

We share the international community's concern that the peace process in the Middle East has been stalled, and we are disappointed that there is still no substantial progress on the long-standing problem in Cyprus. Hostilities in Afghanistan continue unabated, civil wars still rage in the Sudan and Angola and violence in Kosovo has escalated. New complications have arisen to increase instability and conflict in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa.

These unresolved conflicts undermine the political, economic and social fabric of the States concerned, bringing destruction and untold human suffering to the victims of war. We cannot afford to drift into complacency while increasing numbers of the world's people are destroyed, dispossessed and despoiled by war. In the face of this, we should strengthen our resolve to stand against aggression and the use of force, and to support the resolution of disputes and conflicts through negotiated settlements.

We encourage Member States to support the Secretary-General's initiative for strengthening the capability of the United Nations to deal with conflict resolution, prevention and early warning. I also wish to use this opportunity to commend the United Nations peacekeeping forces for the great contribution which they continue to make to the maintenance of peace, notwithstanding the difficult circumstances in which they work.

We are deeply distressed at the increasing acts of violence directed against international peacekeeping personnel. I wish to pay special tribute to these volunteers, some of whom have given their lives, for their sacrifice in the cause of peace.

The Charter of the United Nations invests in the Security Council the principal authority for multilateral decision-making in matters affecting international peace and security. We are therefore concerned at the tendency of States to take unilateral action which they deem to be in their national interest in situations of conflict with other nations. Jamaica reaffirms its confidence in the principle of collective security, on which the role of the Security Council is predicated.

It is also important that the actions of the Council inspire confidence and that there be greater openness and transparency in its working methods. We believe that, like any other international body, the Security Council should undergo a process of democratic reform if it is effectively to meet the new challenges of an ever changing world.

We are committed to working as equal partners with the rest of the international community to strengthen the capacity of the Security Council to respond to the needs of Member States in matters of peace and security. To that end, my Government has presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Council for the period 2000-2001.

My Government attaches importance to the fact that the long awaited International Criminal Court, which the Secretary-General described as the missing link in the international legal system, has now been constituted by an internationally agreed Statute. We commend the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for taking the initiative in calling for its establishment. That institution will provide a framework for the legal expression of international opposition to the terrible crimes being perpetrated against humanity which the United Nations had not been able to address effectively.

This year the international community celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As we commemorate this important milestone, we should affirm our commitment to the ideals of tolerance, peace and understanding for all peoples. Let us also demonstrate mutual respect for each other's right to self-determination, including the right to choose one's own path for achieving national goals, and the right to sustainable development.

There can be no doubt that peace and security are prerequisites for the attainment of sustainable development. It is equally true, however, that where there is economic and social deprivation, there can be no real peace.

Jamaica therefore strongly endorses the right to development as an integral part of fundamental human rights and underscores the important contribution which realization of this right would make to the fuller enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this regard, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General on progress being made in the elaboration of a strategy for the implementation and promotion of the right to development.

We continue to look to the United Nations system for support of our development agenda, which goes beyond our effort to gain fair access to international markets and to secure a just and equitable share of global prosperity.

Central to improving the welfare of our people must be measures to alleviate and ultimately eradicate poverty and to promote environmental protection and sustainable development. We need to strengthen our institutional framework for capacity-building and we need to invest in development of our human resources.

This is our people-centred vision for development, and we recognize the need, if we are to make a reality of this vision, to continue to devise and implement public policies which ensure that the gains from economic growth and development are equitably distributed throughout society.

This challenge of good governance demands an institutional infrastructure that promotes transparency and accountability in public administration, ensures the effective management of fiscal and monetary policies and protects the integrity of judicial and law enforcement systems.

A crucial component of our economic and social transformation is the development of our human resources. Jamaica supports the view that sustainable development cannot be achieved without sustained human development. Indeed, the pivotal importance of our human resources to the development process was reaffirmed by the Caribbean Community member States in the Montego Bay Declaration adopted in 1997.

We in the Caribbean region stand firmly committed to, first, nurturingthe development of each person's potential without regard to gender; secondly, developing a culture of entrepreneurship; thirdly, research and development as a way of life and a means of improving production; and finally, improving the competitiveness of those industries on which our economies are based. We look to the international community to support these aspirations.

In this regard, Jamaica welcomes the Secretary-General's proposed initiatives to strengthen the international framework for human development. We agree that it would be useful to convene global and regional seminars exploring ways to advance human resource development and institution-building in preparation for the Millennium Assembly to be held in the year 2000.

The issue of sustainable development for small island developing States is of particular importance to Jamaica. It speaks to the very survival of a group of island States whose economic viability and developmental aspirations are inextricably linked to the carrying capacity of the fragile ecosystems in which these nations make their home. I speak of the ecologically vulnerable islands and low-lying coastal States of the Caribbean, which are continually subject to the pressures of urbanization and resource exploitation, to the pollution of their coastal waters and to the threat of natural disasters. We are endangered by the threat of sea-level rise and face the destruction of our coral reefs.

The danger posed by natural disasters was most recently demonstrated by hurricane Georges, which wreaked destruction through the Caribbean, causing widespread loss of life and property in Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Saint Kitts and Nevis. We take this opportunity to appeal to the international community to provide urgent and generous humanitarian assistance and support for the reconstruction of our sister Caribbean States. Jamaica welcomes the ongoing effort of the United Nations to develop economic and ecological vulnerability indices for small island developing States and will be monitoring closely the outcome of this work.

The success of the small island developing States initiative will depend on the negotiation of favourable agreements among national stakeholders and on the forging of effective partnerships with donor countries. Jamaica therefore looks forward to the convening of the special session for the review of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 1999, which provides an opportunity for real progress to be made through the commitment of financial resources. What we need now is an action-oriented follow-up programme to take our economies into the twenty-first century.

Jamaica is a strong advocate of multilateralism and believes that measures available within the multilateral framework should be employed to assist developing countries to benefit meaningfully from the process of globalization. We note that while this process holds much promise for growth and prosperity, it also poses serious challenges for developing countries, many of which are being increasingly marginalized. The reality is that the globalization process is heightening patterns of uneven development among developed and developing countries, and it is already very clear that there is no globalization of benefits.

The plight of developing countries in the wake of the financial crisis currently affecting the global economy is made even grimmer when we take into account the decline in concessionary financial flows from the donor community which we have witnessed in recent years. Official development assistance represents today only an average of 0.22 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries, a far cry from the target of 0.7 per cent set in 1972. The share of official development assistance in net resource flows to developing countries fell from 64 per cent in 1994 to 22 per cent in 1996.

Taken with the heavy burden of the debt-service payments which must be met, we are faced with the unhappy circumstance of net reverse flows from the South to the North at a time when additional resources are needed to address the challenges which attend the globalization process.

These trends must be reversed if developing countries are to have a fair opportunity to achieve meaningful development; for the success of the development process is dependent on the availability of external financing, and concessionary resource flows play a significant role in the maintenance of economic stability, the development of infrastructure and capacity-building, which are prerequisites for effective participation in the globalization process.

Jamaica considers that the time has come for us to address these issues in serious dialogue. There is an urgent need to identify ways in which development financing from industrialized to developing and transition economies for both public and private sector enterprise may be increased. We must explore measures to relieve the external debt of the developing countries, including the cancellation of debt. We should seek to have dialogues between creditor and debtor countries to ensure an increase in the flow of concessionary financing in support of economic reforms, poverty eradication and the achievement of sustainable development.

We therefore join the call for the urgent convening of a conference on financing for development at an early date. Crucial issues which we would wish to see discussed at such a meeting are strategies for mobilizing domestic resources for development; mobilization of international private financial flows; international financial cooperation for development; debt relief; and trade facilitation for development.

Beyond this proposed conference, my Government recognizes that there is a need for ongoing exchange between the North and the South. While the days of the ideological divide and political polarization are behind us, we are still faced with the challenge of North-South disparity in development and opportunity. We need to foster increased collaboration between the developed and the developing world to identify ways in which wider cooperation on issues concerning trade and investment, debt and development may be pursued.

We consider that a process of dialogue on these issues could be initiated by a representative group of developing and transition economies in consultation with the major industrialized countries. We believe that such a process of dialogue would pave the way for a broader framework of functional cooperation in areas of interest to both North and South.

It is with much satisfaction that Jamaica assumes the chairmanship of the Group of 15 developing States, and we look forward to hosting the ninth ministerial meeting in Jamaica in February next year. Jamaica, during its tenure, will seek to ensure that developing countries play a more active role in shaping the international economy so as to promote greater balance and equity.

My Government remains deeply concerned at the ever expanding illicit drug trade, which is not only a menace to civil society, but also undermines the economic viability of our countries. The extraordinary demand for and supply of illicit drugs for this lucrative trade has resulted in the formation of transnational networks, including highly sophisticated money-laundering operations. Of even greater concern is the now well-established link between the drug trade and the proliferation of small arms. The ready availability of small arms has intensified the cycle of crime and violence in our societies.

The special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, held earlier this year, underscored the need to strengthen the process of bilateral, regional and international cooperation in the fight against illicit drug activities. These initiatives should also deal simultaneously with the related problem of small arms. Jamaica calls on the international community to fully support these efforts.

Jamaica joins in condemning the acts of terrorism committed in Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi during August. We support the adoption of a multilateral approach as the most effective means of removing this threat to the security of the international community.

Caribbean States recognize the ocean as a symbol of the common heritage of mankind, a vital resource which should be managed in a responsible manner so as to ensure its continued use for present and future generations. Caribbean Governments are committed to the protection of the Caribbean Sea, our shared patrimony. We have recently taken a decision to develop and implement a comprehensive coastal zone management programme by the year 2000. We continue to be concerned at the threat tothe fragile marine environment posed by the regular shipment of nuclear and other hazardous waste through the Caribbean Sea.

Jamaica commends the Government of Portugal for its initiative in establishing the Independent World Commission on the Oceans, on which an eminent Jamaican serves. As part of its recognition of the International Year of the Ocean, the Government of Jamaica has established a National Council on Ocean and Coastal Zone Management to promote the sustainable development and use of our marine resources.

The International Seabed Authority, which has its headquarters in Kingston, continues to make progress on the negotiation of a mining code. It is hoped that these negotiations will be finalized at an early date, so that a regulatory regime for the resources of the seabed may be firmly established. We call on Member States to participate more actively in these negotiations in order to ensure that the code which is developed will protect the interests of all countries. We also urge Member States to support the operation of the Authority through the commitment of resources.

It has not escaped our attention that many of the preceding speakers have made reference to the need for the promotion of international peace, human security and sustainable development. As we move forward towards the end of an era, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that we do not face the dawn of the new millennium burdened by the weight of unresolved issues which impede the development of our community of nations and which undermine the well-being of our peoples.

Clearly, it is in our individual and collective interest to participate fully in the process for development and peace, for, after all, the character of the global village of the future will ultimately be determined by the quality of the input that each of us invests today.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bhutan, His Excellency Mr. Jigmi Yoser Thinley, on whom I now call.

Mr. Thinley (Bhutan): It is with great pleasure that I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your unanimous election to preside over the General Assembly at this session. This session is particularly significant because we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is also important for a less uplifting reason: during this session the international community is confronted with serious challenges and is hard pressed to find collective wisdom to deal with disturbing developments and trends. As you guide us in our deliberations on these issues, I wish you well and would like to extend to you the full support of my delegation. I also wish to join the preceding speakers, all of whom have justly praised the excellent work done by your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko.

Our Secretary-General stated in his address to the recent summit of the Non-Aligned Movement that

> "human rights are not simply a matter of civil and political freedom. Genuine freedom of choice requires economic, social and cultural emancipation too."

From the very beginning of our development process and to ensure such emancipation, Bhutan has been guided by a philosophy of maintaining a harmonious balance between material and spiritual prosperity. This we believe is the way forward to attaining our goal of gross national happiness.

I have the pleasure to inform the Assembly that the throne of the Kingdom of Bhutan has always been the fountainhead of the many changes in our country which have led to greater empowerment of the people. Just three months ago our King introduced, through the National Assembly, some profound changes in the governance of our country. These changes are in addition to the earlier institutionalization of participatory decision making processes at the district and grass-roots levels. Upon dissolution of the appointed Cabinet, a new Council of Ministers has been elected for a specific term by the National Assembly. His Majesty the King has voluntarily relinquished his role as the head of Government and was further successful in convincing the National Assembly to introduce a mechanism for the removal of a reigning monarch through a periodic vote of confidence. Such ongoing changes have further strengthened the rule of law and have enhanced even further the direct participation of the people in development and governance.

As we stand at the threshold of another millennium of human civilization, our generation of leaders and policy makers must not fail to grasp the unprecedented opportunities. Ours is the past and ours, too, is the future. Even as we are engaged in the last defining moments of the twentieth century, we have a decisive role in shaping the beginning of the next thousand years. We cannot undermine our own role. Narrow interests and differences must not be allowed to deter us from the greater legacy we owe to posterity.

I believe that we should look upon all the challenges that have spiralled in recent years as a last reminder of the growing vulnerabilities of human society. There is the Asian crisis, which now threatens to cause global economic contraction and is already undermining the social and political stability of some nations. The environment is wreaking havoc in many quarters of the world, causing loss of life and property in both the richest and the poorest countries. And just as trade, technology and the reality of interdependence force us to abide with each other in a world that is shrinking in space and natural resources, we find ourselves torn apart by bigotry, intolerance and hate. Terrorism is on the rise, our children are lured by drugs and crime, and even the richest nations among us can ill afford the rising cost of growing prison populations. Then, there is the spectre of a nuclear holocaust, which continues to haunt us. Unless we look at our future and manage the compelling forces of globalization with a greater sense of spirituality and social concern, I fear that the global village will fail to provide much of that elusive state of joy and contentment to which we all aspire.

Terrorism in all its manifestations is unjustifiable, regardless of the cause it seeks to espouse. It must be condemned in the strongest of terms. Those who use terror or the threat of terror target innocent people. Their objectives are clear: to foster an environment of fear if their goals are not met. Such heinous crimes against humanity must not go unpunished. The voices of those who live in constant fear of having the most fundamental of human rights — the right to live without fear and the right to life itself — abused and violated can no longer be ignored. The conclusion and effective implementation of a comprehensive international convention on terrorism therefore assumes great significance.

The recent nuclear tests in South Asia have aroused much concern. However, we are heartened by the positive steps being taken by the concerned parties to calm the fears of the international community. As a small, peace-loving country, Bhutan has always condemned nuclear armament and advocated full and comprehensive elimination of all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Our delegation urges all participants in the disarmament processes to undertake a more realistic assessment of the prevailing global security arrangement, which, we believe, has the inherent weakness of enticing States to join an exclusive club. Unless there is an accelerated process towards complete and comprehensive denuclearization beyond the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and beyond the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the world must be prepared to face the eventuality of a nuclear club that will lose its exclusivity.

Mr. Kastrup (Germany), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Active and not passive interdependence is the primary condition for all human progress in the future. It is clear that prosperity in one part of the global village cannot be sustained when poverty prevails in the other. Yet unconscionable levels of disparity continue to grow between the rich and the poor countries. While one section of human society is burying itself in the waste of conspicuous and excessive consumption, the other is plagued by hunger and exposure. Against this backdrop, it is sad to note that shrinkage of official development assistance remains a serious concern. Political will must be generated to reverse this trend and to inject new vitality into international cooperation for development in the interest of shared and sustainable prosperity.

Revitalization and reform of our Organization has been the singular underlying theme of recent sessions of the General Assembly. We are all agreed on the need for major changes if the United Nations is to effectively meet the current and emerging challenges of the twenty-first century. As we continue to assess the long-term implications of the Secretary-General's proposal contained in his report, we should bear in mind the needs and aspirations of small and developing countries, which comprise the overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership.

Efforts should also focus on further strengthening of the role and capacity of the Organization in the promotion of development. In this regard, we welcome the inter-agency collaborative arrangements, which we feel have already led to improved coordination and cost-effectiveness of the United Nations development agencies. In so saying, I should like to place on record the deep gratitude of the people of Bhutan for the vital role and

contributions of the various United Nations agencies in our country's development efforts. These agencies often play a lead and coordinating role in such sectors of our national development programmes as health, education and infrastructure. Indeed, it is the face of the United Nations as a prime mover of development that the masses in many of our countries most appreciate and cherish.

Differences in perspective have prevented us from arriving at a meaningful agreement on substantive issues concerning the reform of the Security Council. Sixty-five lengthy meetings held by the Open-ended Working Group on the question of Security Council expansion and reform have yielded few results, and tangible proposals remain elusive.

My country firmly supports the position of the Non-Aligned Movement on this matter, as reiterated in the Final Document of its twelfth Summit meeting, which was convened in South Africa earlier this month. Bhutan is of the view that the current permanent members have an obligation to be more responsive to calls for multifaceted reforms of the Council. It must be rendered more effective and transparent through democratization and the enlargement of its membership, both in the permanent and non-permanent categories. New permanent members must include countries that have the capacity to share greater international responsibilities and reflect equitable geographical representation. We believe that Japan, whose apportionment of the United Nations regular budget will exceed 20 per cent by the year 2000, and India as a developing country which represents one sixth of humanity, are two countries that deserve permanent membership in the Security Council. We remain convinced that the presence of developing countries is all the more essential for the reason that they form the object of most actions of the Council.

Before I conclude, my delegation wishes to express its deep sadness over the loss of human life and destruction of property and infrastructure in the aftermath of the worst ever floods in Bangladesh. While the people of Bangladesh battle against this cruel act of nature, the people of Bhutan are one with them and have extended to them some assistance. As a least developed country, Bangladesh does not have the resources to alleviate the suffering of its people and to put itself on the road to recovery and normalization. We are hopeful that the international community will respond promptly and generously to the appeal of the Prime Minister and the Government of Bangladesh.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon, His Excellency Mr. Augustin Kontchou Kouomegni, on whom I now call.

Mr. Kontchou Kouomegni (Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first of all, Sir, to convey, on behalf of my delegation, my warmest and most heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. His election is a tribute to his country, Uruguay, a country with which Cameroon shares many common ideals. It is also a mark of our confidence in his qualities as a diplomat and lawyer of renown. He can rest assured of the full cooperation of the delegation of Cameroon in successfully discharging his important duty.

I also pay a warm tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, who discharged with effectiveness and authority the delicate and high-profile mission with which he was entrusted.

Finally, I renew the firm support of my country, Cameroon, for the work undertaken by the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, at the head of the Secretariat of our Organization since his election. He has resolutely and effectively tackled the reform of the United Nations with discretion, tact and realism, so as to make it capable of meeting the challenges facing it.

At a time of globalization and information superhighways, it is more urgent and necessary than ever to place the development and dignity of humankind at the centre of our concerns. We must also acknowledge that the tremendous technological advances at the end of this century justify high hopes of a better tomorrow.

By working for the right to development for both present and future generations, by charting new and more secure paths in the quest for peace, by watching over international security more effectively than in the past, our Organization is, at this delicate period in history, helping to ease the anguish of humankind in an international environment that is increasingly complex, unequal and disquieting.

In this context, the current session of the General Assembly gains greater prominence and importance because it coincides with two fiftieth anniversaries: that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and that of

the start of peacekeeping operations. Those two events will form the basis of my remarks.

With regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first words of the preamble retain, 50 years later, striking relevance. It states:

> "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

Human rights are, first and foremost, a question of dignity: dignity for every human being; dignity for all of humankind. We believe that this search for dignity, which is a condition for peace, justice and freedom in the world, is the common ideal towards which all human rights actions and activities should be aimed.

The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary is a true rallying call to us and should provide the international community with an opportunity to refocus its approach to human rights questions, which remains very simplistic. Indeed, too often we forget that civil and political rights, which exercise the international community so much, can be fully developed only if economic, social and cultural rights are also guaranteed. Recent experiences of democratization processes in Africa remind us, by their very fragility, of the incontrovertible indivisibility, universality and interdependence of human rights.

To paraphrase the words the head of State of Cameroon, His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, spoke at the World Food Summit in Rome, what dignity can there be for the hungry? The international community must therefore give equal priority to the promotion of the right to a minimum standard of living.

In a world in which the globalization of trade, instead of placing human beings at the centre of its concerns, merely means speculation, market manipulation and deals that generate the greatest profits, making the rich richer and reducing the poorest to destitution, the social environment itself is the cause of tension and conflict. That is why we congratulate the Secretary-General on his report (A/52/871), submitted to the Security Council as document S/1998/318 on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

In this context, it is apt that, in seeking to establish a true culture of human rights and fundamental freedoms, the international community has chosen the central theme of the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary to be "human rights for all".

Poverty is today the most serious threat to human dignity. This is particularly true in Africa, which is the least advanced region and the one most seriously affected by the economic crisis. Despite the reforms that have taken place, at enormous social cost, to promote good governance, democracy and the liberalization of economies, meeting basic needs remains for many a luxury in that continent. Whether we are talking about access to drinking water, primary health care, or education or about transport or other communication infrastructures, international cooperation has not yet borne fruit in a reliable, continuing, predictable and effective way.

Official development assistance, which elsewhere has helped to give rise to decent standards of living, is dwindling drastically. Despite the increasingly favourable juridical environment offered by Africa, investors seem to be losing interest in the region. The debt burden is getting worse. Our products do not have easy access to international markets, nor are they priced according to their true value.

It is clear that the marginalization of Africa seems inevitable unless a true spirit of solidarity quickly provides real long-term solutions. It is time for the various initiatives, plans of action and other programmes adopted to benefit Africa to be translated into reality. Basing itself on the efforts made by the peoples of Africa, the international community must increase its assistance to that continent so as to enable Africans themselves to make the progress that is indispensable for developing their potential. In that way African countries will be able successfully to integrate themselves into world economic networks and achieve the development to which they legitimately aspire, despite the well-known geographical and historical handicaps. Such a development would inevitably benefit all of humankind.

This solidarity should take the specific form of reconsideration — indeed, the cancelling — of the debts of African countries. We should recall that decisions to cancel debt in the past have enabled countries in difficult and precarious situations to rediscover the road to economic prosperity, democracy and greater political stability.

The path thus seems clearly laid out for the rich countries that are working to promote freedom and human

rights. They should reflect, at the dawn of the third millennium, on their relations with developing countries that are becoming poorer because of their deep indebtedness.

North-South solidarity should also be reflected in a new concept of official development assistance. Such assistance is indispensable for establishing development infrastructure within the context of poverty eradication. Private flows, channelled through non-governmental organizations, cannot alone take on that role. Furthermore, structural adjustment should aim to strengthen and improve the autonomous management capacity of countries in difficulty. Otherwise, globalization will mean that certain countries become richer while others become poorer. That would render meaningless the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and put in grave danger the requirement of dignity for every human being, for all people and for peace in the world.

Indeed, what freedom or self-determination — and especially, what sovereignty — can there be for a starving people? What democracy can there be for a people suffering from malnutrition, with no access to basic health care, drinking water or elementary education. We thus need to return the human being to the centre of development. Cameroon has constantly contributed to this lofty endeavour.

The salient activities we have undertaken to mark the fiftieth anniversary in my country include informing people about human rights and making all of society aware of human rights issues through media campaigns, seminars, conferences and poster campaigns throughout our land, even in villages; the introduction of human rights teaching in schools and universities; issuing special postage stamps; promoting in particular the rights of women, children and disabled or infirm people, establishing a prize for the best research in the human rights area; and the opening by the head of State of a public square dedicated to human rights.

But above and beyond commemorating the anniversary, Cameroon has for a decade been making important progress in promoting human rights. It did so first through a series of legislative and regulatory measures that, *inter alia*, abolished legal exemptions, restored individual and collective freedoms, put an end to censorship and ensured better protection for the interests of workers and vulnerable social sectors.

Through constitutional revision and a progressive electoral system, we have established total adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ensured the full participation of our people in making political choices. Furthermore, a national committee for human rights and freedoms was established in 1990, which is freely carrying out its activities throughout the country, as are the many non-governmental organizations and human rights groups that have come into being.

With regard to progress made in the world since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the efforts that remain to be made in this area, there is no doubt that the promotion of and respect for human rights are a difficult, ongoing endeavour. Vigilance must therefore be our watchword, and the struggle for human rights should not flag in any region of the world.

The United Nations must continue to ensure that human rights are fully enjoyed by all the peoples of the world. To that end, the letter and spirit of the Universal Declaration should gradually be adapted to changing mores and to science and technology. Bodies that are above the fray of ideologies and interests should ensure that it is observed, including through a system of regional and international human rights courts.

With regard to the fiftieth anniversary of peacekeeping operations, we wish to pay tribute to the work done by the United Nations, which has always made its presence felt wherever peace has been threatened. Thanks to the Blue Helmets, the United Nations is present in all the world's trouble spots, keeping the peace.

It is true that some voices have been heard here and there deploring their sluggishness, hesitation and, in some cases the inaction. Sometimes the presence of a United Nations force or mission has not been able to prevent large-scale massacres or crimes against humanity, perpetrated in violation of the most elementary rules of humanitarian law. Such limits to the actions of our Organization remind us in a very timely manner that the United Nations can act only within the limits of the means made available to it by the Member States. It is up to Member States, therefore, to provide it with the necessary resources to enable it to respond fully to the mission entrusted to it by the peoples of the United Nations.

Despite these limits, we must acknowledge in a positive spirit that over the years many peacekeeping operations and other actions taken by the Secretary-General have made it possible to prevent the emergence, aggravation or continuation of many conflicts.

Thanks to the Blue Helmets, millions of human lives have been saved, and sometimes the United Nations has paid a heavy price for this total commitment to the cause of peace. The recent tragic death of Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye and his team, to whose memory I wish to reaffirm the fraternal homage of the people of Cameroon, is one more particularly unhappy example of this point.

By ensuring the safety of peoples, the delivery of humanitarian aid and respect for ceasefire agreements and by performing an increasing number of administrative tasks, the Blue Helmets are helping restore confidence and prevent loss of life and the disintegration of certain States. Such commitments and sacrifices deserve all our encouragement.

The fiftieth anniversary of peacekeeping operations should provide us with an opportunity to think about questions relating to their continuation: problems of financing, the safety of personnel involved in the operations, the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and ethical issues.

With regard to the ethical issues, Cameroon believes that it is time to formulate a code of conduct so that people participating in peacekeeping operations can remain, above all, protectors of human rights as well as true beneficiaries of them. Given the many tasks expected of these operations, it would be appropriate to review their range, their scope and the modalities governing them.

Even now, as we congratulate the United Nations on its work for peace, conflicts are still destroying lives, tearing apart families and communities and placing at risk the future of young generations throughout the world. The reports of the Security Council and of the Secretary-General, which we receive on a regular basis, are particularly important in this respect.

The resurgence of terrorism is another element of the picture, as we were recently reminded by the deadly attacks against the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam and the attack in Omagh. Cameroon, a peaceful, justice-loving country, strongly condemns these unfortunate events that show that we need to redouble our efforts to put an end to mindless violence.

This means that we must silence weapons, prevent disputes and above all create the conditions for true peace.

That does not mean merely the absence of armed conflict, but living together in harmony, with the entire international community and all nations building together a society that respects individual and collective freedoms. We need to begin by recognizing and accepting differences as a source of richness and dynamism. We need to practise tolerance and dialogue, the latter not just between the citizens of one nation but also between States, in order to build a more fraternal and democratic society.

This means in particular that we must opt to settle disputes through peaceful means and that States must turn whenever necessary to the International Court of Justice as the judicial organ of the United Nations and the essential cog not only in the machinery for peaceful settlement of disputes, but also within the general system of peacekeeping and international security established by the Charter.

At the end of the United Nations Decade of International Law, the call has become urgent for States to demonstrate themselves psychologically prepared to seek recourse naturally to the International Court of Justice and the political bodies of the United Nations and those of regional organizations. This is Cameroon's conviction, as well as that of the General Assembly, which in resolution 3232 (XXIX), paragraph 6, reaffirmed that,

> "recourse to judicial settlement of legal disputes, particularly referral to the International Court of Justice, should not be considered an unfriendly act between States."

That is why Cameroon went to the International Court of Justice at The Hague with regard to its dispute with Nigeria over territorial and maritime boundaries. In this context, I should like to take this opportunity to make an urgent appeal to the international community, and especially to the United Nations, to help keep the peace between our two countries before, during and after the Court's verdict.

Silencing weapons is a good thing; eliminating their use through prevention and — why not? — through disarmament is even better. That is why we must not rest until all weapons of mass destruction are eradicated, be they of a nuclear, chemical, biological or other nature.

It must be pointed out here that another danger has appeared in certain subregions of Africa — namely, the proliferation of small arms and their illicit circulation. This phenomenon is already a threat to peace and should

be quickly contained because it can sow the seeds of conflict.

The conclusions of the recent seminar organized by the United Nations Secretariat in Yaoundé from 27 to 31 July 1998 within the framework of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa are particularly illustrative in that regard. I would like to thank the Secretary-General and donor countries for their support of the activities of that Committee. We know that we can continue to count on their support in implementing the recommendations of that seminar, especially in continuing the Committee's activities. That institution is called on to play a crucial role in mobilizing the countries of central Africa to take responsibility for the security of their subregion under the aegis of the United Nations.

Also with regard to prevention, the recent creation in Rome of the International Criminal Court is a timely addition to the mechanisms that protect human rights and maintain peace. The International Criminal Court will in effect be responsible for prosecuting and punishing persons guilty of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression. Cameroon is pleased to have been one of the first signatories to its Statute and hopes that all States will become parties to it. To this end, it is urgent that the crime of aggression be rapidly and clearly defined. This would abolish the impunity of aggressors and prove to the peoples of the world our real determination to put an end to war once and for all.

In the context of this general debate, I have deliberately chosen, as the Assembly has seen, not to touch on most current problems, particularly ongoing crises. I wanted to concentrate on certain permanent essential values that lie at the basis of the two observances I mentioned, whose violation causes most of the misfortune in our world today. I refer to the human persons's right to dignity and fulfilment, the right to development and the right to peace — in short, the right to life. The United Nations is the guarantor of their observance and promotion.

For Africa, the recent report of the Secretary-General, which should act as a kind of compass for all of us, lays down the foundations for all those committed to working for the prosperity of our peoples. In reality, all regions of the world need this kind of wake-up call and this kind of report. We are accountable to future generations for making these values a reality.

Let us not disappoint. Let us not allow people to be left along the side of the road. It is up to us to do everything possible so that these humane values remain a constant concern of the United Nations and of its specialized agencies.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf.

Mr. Al-Sahaf (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. I am fully confident that his experience and skill will ensure the success of the work of this session.

The world continues to labour under events that attest to the inability of the international community to avert the effects of international transformations which carry within them the elements of tension and conflict, given the imbalance at the international level caused by a unipolar system wherein a sole dominant player in the international arena seeks to impose its hegemony on the international community. That sole player is not concerned except with its selfish and narrow interests, and with imposing its dominance over international institutions and organizations. As a result, the United Nations faces a serious challenge represented by the degree of its ability to regain the balance required of it in order to accomplish its objectives as set forth in the Charter.

In this context, the United Nations witnesses attempts to reform its structures and work mechanism to make it compatible with the current political and economic realities. Most important is the effort to reform the working methods of the General Assembly and the Security Council in order to bring the work of these two organs into full harmony with the evolution of international relations and with the increased membership of the international Organization. This evolution requires equitable representation of States from the various continents on the Security Council, whether through permanent or non-permanent membership. The success of these efforts depends largely on the serious political will of Member States of our Organization. The reform of the work of the Security Council is urgently needed, if we are to end control over it by a few States and transform it into an institution which truly represents international realities. Without these reforms, it is impossible to achieve the purposes and the principles of the Charter with regard to the maintenance of peace and security, promoting economic and social development and strengthening cooperation among people.

International peace and security are affected by the irrational and biased character of the way issues of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, are addressed. There are States which maintain huge arsenals of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical, biological or long-range missiles, while other States are being disarmed or called upon to disarm themselves under all sorts of pretexts. The proper approach in this regard is in the comprehensive implementation of the relevant international treaties and comprehensive agreements, free of selectivity and discrimination. Then, and only then, can the goal of general and complete disarmament be put to the service of the cause of peace and security in the world and of ensuring the legitimate rights of States to defend their security and independence in a just and equitable manner.

The Middle East region is witnessing today a grave situation and serious impairment of the balance of powers. The Zionist entity possesses a huge arsenal of weapons of mass destruction of all types --- nuclear in particular, chemical, biological or long-range missiles — in disregard of the General Assembly's efforts to render the Middle East a zone free of weapons from mass destruction; of Security Council resolution 487 (1981), which demands that the Zionist entity place its installations under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency; and of paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), which states that the actions to be taken towards Iraq represent steps towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. This situation, resulting from the Zionist entity's failure to comply with these resolutions, threatens security and peace in the region and in the entire world, and encourages an arms race in the region.

Iraq strongly affirms its support for the struggle of the Palestinian people against Zionist settler colonialism in Palestine. It supports the struggle of the Palestine Liberation Organization for the realization of its legitimate objectives, endorsed by the international community, which affirms the inalienable rights of the Palestinians in Palestine, including its capital, Al-Quds al-Sharif.

The comprehensive, inhumane blockade imposed on Iraq has entered its ninth year. This blockade has caused and continues to cause the death of thousands of Iraqi citizens every month due to the lack of medicine and food and a grave deterioration in the infrastructures of the industrial, agricultural, health, education, service sectors and other areas. This situation calls for the strong condemnation of those who insist, for ulterior political motives, on continuing to inflict on the Iraqi people this destructive blockade, the tragic consequences of which are tantamount to internationally proscribed acts of genocide.

Security Council resolution 687 (1991) contains two sets of obligations: those which must be fulfilled by Iraq, and those that require the Security Council to lift the blockade on Iraq when Iraq has met its obligations.

The obligations imposed on Iraq concern disarmament. Briefly, they require the destruction, removal or rendering harmless, under the supervision of the United Nations Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency, of all weapons of mass destruction which were in Iraq's possession. They enjoin Iraq to refrain from the production, possession, stockpiling, use or development of such weapons in the areas prohibited by resolution 687 (1991), which are the ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometres and chemical and biological weapons, together with the nuclear programme. These obligations imposed on Iraq also provide for the establishment of a system of ongoing monitoring, verification and registration of compliance.

In return for the achievement of the above, with regard to the elimination of the prohibited weapons, paragraph 22 of resolution 687 (1991) provides that the prohibition against the import of basic commodities and products originating in Iraq and the prohibition against financial transactions related thereto contained in Council resolution 661 (1990) shall cease to remain in effect.

Throughout the past seven and one-half years, Iraq has fully cooperated with the Security Council, the Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Iraq has met all the conditions and obligations imposed on it as an expression of its good will and in order to have the blockade imposed on its people lifted.

All prohibited weapons have been destroyed over the past seven and one-half years, together with hundreds of plants, installations and equipment related to those weapons. The operations were carried out with so much vengefulness that they even included cooling and lighting equipment, as well furnishings and other items that had nothing to do with the prohibited weapons or with their production. Since 1994, the Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency have established a comprehensive system of strict monitoring.

However, although Iraq has fully implemented all the requirements of resolution 687 (1991) concerning

disarmament, the Security Council has not taken any action to implement its own obligations towards Iraq, as prescribed by paragraph 22 of that same resolution.

Questions which must be legitimately addressed to the Security Council are: why should Iraq bear all these burdens and losses while the blockade continues and no one knows when it is going to be lifted? Why has the Security Council been unable so far to discharge its obligations towards Iraq?

Iraq has cooperated throughout the past seven and one half years with the Security Council, the Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency and has met all the requirements of the Security Council's resolutions in the hope that its cooperation would lead to lifting the blockade imposed on the people of Iraq. However, the blockade has not yet been lifted, thus rendering the continuation of cooperation both meaningless and useless.

The Special Commission entrusted with pursuing the implementation of Iraq's obligations under the provisions of resolution 687 (1991), which concerns disarmament and directs the monitoring system established since 1994, refrains — I repeat, refrains — from reporting the facts about Iraq's compliance with its obligations under Security Council resolutions. The reason for its failure to do so is political. The Special Commission and its Chairman operate under the influence of an arrogant, powerful State that is pursuing ulterior political aims against Iraq that have no relevance whatsoever to Security Council resolutions on Iraq.

For political reasons, the Special Commission and its Chairman refrain from reporting to the Council that Iraq is totally free of all weapons prohibited under resolution 687 (1991) in the three areas of missiles and chemical and biological weapons, even though the Special Commission has no concrete evidence to prove the opposite. The Special Commission and its Chairman both refrain from reporting to the Council that all the plants, equipment and installations which the Commission itself determined had anything to do with those weapons have been destroyed and that the remaining plants, equipment and installations capable of so-called dual-use are totally under a comprehensive and strict monitoring system. Accordingly, Iraq is incapable of resuming the production of such weapons. Finally, the Special Commission and its Chairman refrain, also for political reasons, from reporting to the Council that since the establishment of the monitoring system in 1994 the Commission has not noted any violation on the part of Iraq with regard to resuming the production of the prohibited weapons.

This prejudiced position on the part of the Special Commission and its Chairman has brought action to a dead end and into an unacceptable vicious circle. Iraq was therefore obliged to suspend cooperation with the Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency because insisting on dead-end paths and vicious circles can only lead to the continuation of the blockade on the people of Iraq, which is unacceptable and even contrary to resolution 687 (1991).

In order to seek a way out of this deadlock and break out of the vicious circle created by the Special Commission and its Chairman, Iraq has welcomed the proposal for a comprehensive review submitted by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to the Security Council last 6 August. Iraq has emphasized that such a comprehensive review is a legal and moral obligation which the Council is duty-bound to discharge. By the terms of resolution 687 (1991), the Council is required to implement paragraph 22, relating to lifting the prohibitions against the import of basic commodities and products originating in Iraq, based upon the completion by Iraq of all actions contemplated in part C of the resolution. The Council is also required to undertake a review every 60 days aimed at either reducing or lifting the embargo in the light of the implementation by Iraq of all its obligations under the relevant Council resolutions. However, the 40 reviews carried out so far have been a mere formality, arbitrary and far from comprehensive.

Thus, embarking upon a real comprehensive review in accordance with the Secretary-General's proposal is not a reward given to Iraq, but a duty that the Security Council has to undertake under its own resolutions. Iraq has expressed its willingness to participate effectively in such a comprehensive review — it is one of its inalienable rights. Iraq has also expressed its hope that such a comprehensive review of what it has accomplished in terms of disarmament under part C of resolution 687 (1991) will be made as soon as possible and without further delay. It is our hope that it will be indeed comprehensive, fair and honest and that Iraq will be given every possible opportunity to submit its point of view on all relevant questions that might be posed by the Special Commission, the IAEA or members of the Security Council. Iraq also hopes that the review will be conducted under the personal supervision of the Secretary-General and that Mr. Annan will see to it that such a comprehensive review is bound by a clearly defined

timetable and not allow it to be an aimless process without foreseeable end.

While we support carrying out such a comprehensive review in an objective, fair and impartial manner, we affirm Iraq's right to expect the Security Council to proceed to take action to lift the inhumane sanctions that have been imposed on the people of Iraq for eight years now. The people and leadership of Iraq will accept no less.

The Acting President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of Bolivia, Mr. Javier Murillo, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Murillo de la Rocha (Bolivia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The election of the Foreign Minister of Uruguay as President of this session of the General Assembly is a source of great pride to Latin America. It is also a fitting tribute to Mr. Opertti, whose diplomatic experience and skills augur well for the success of this fifty-third session.

Just when it seemed that we had secured stability, signs of a severe crisis reappeared in the horizon. Indeed, commodity prices have declined on average by 30 per cent, reaching their lowest levels in the last three decades in real terms. Consequently, exports from Latin America to developed countries, consisting primarily of raw materials, have begun to shrink, and trade balance deficits in the region have increased proportionately.

There has been a decline in growth of output in Latin America. Businesses are reducing production volume, paying less tax and going further into debt with the banks. There is a proportionate decline in domestic savings and investment in infrastructure, in the training of human resources and in the production of goods and services. Visible unemployment is on the rise, and shadow economic activities are gaining ground.

This brief account — no less grim for its brevity — of the current situation points to a dangerous recession in Asia and Latin America.

Of course, the fact that this turbulence began about a year ago in Asia, halfway round the world, before reaching the Andes, reveals the extent to which the world economic system has become interdependent. Both the scale and the consequences of this interdependence would have been inconceivable until recently. The planet has indeed become the global village which was to be the sign of the future, as we had all heard.

But there is an ugly and unfair side to globalization that I wish to stress. Countries — and when I use the word, I do not just mean abstract entities, but actual people with spiritual and material needs — are not paying only for their own mistakes but also for the economic policy errors and negligence of others.

Let me take my own country as an example. A small country, with enormous structural limitations, it made a gigantic effort, at enormous cost and at the price of enormous sacrifices, to put its accounts and institutional structure in order. Bolivia overcame hyper-inflation, restored its macroeconomic balance and made progress in first- and second-generation structural reforms. We established a democratic system which, while not perfect, is being studied in our region as a model of political cooperation and social dialogue. We are prepared to commit all our energies to casting off the historic chains of corruption and poverty.

This entire effort, just now beginning to be productive, may be thwarted by causes that are beyond our control and for which we bear no responsibility. It is true that our progress may not have been sufficiently rapid and that our economic and social structures are still weak, but the crisis we face today does not stem from these deficiencies.

Bolivia and other countries will have to foot the bill for the mistakes of others, for far distant trivialities. We are suffering, the analysts tell us, from the contagion of the Asian crisis, and we would do well to pray harder to prevent anything happening in our own country or anywhere in the broad region surrounding us.

My country did what it had to do and did it well. No one wants to go back to the past. No right-thinking Bolivian wants for a moment to return to the days of authoritarianism, hyper-inflation or the bureaucratic state. No, this is not what it is all about. But nor is it about acting as if nothing had happened — as if all that was necessary to overcome this crisis was to take a stronger dose of the same medicine. That would be an unforgivable mistake.

The current situation has revealed such shortcomings in the international system, particularly with regard to international financial flows, that it would not make sense to keep things as they are. Next month there will be a meeting of the Ministers of Finance of the Group of Seven — the nexus of world economic power — to decide our fate. I do not know if our voice will be heard,

but I do believe that this Assembly of the peoples of the world is itself a message that can at least remind them of a few things.

There is a need for prompt and concerted action on the part of the advanced and developing countries to diminish the volatility of financial markets and to provide some discipline and procedures for incentives and penalties aimed at remedying the major shortcomings in these markets. There must be an increase in the availability of public financial resources in the International Monetary Fund and other institutions to compensate promptly and efficiently for damage caused by unduly heightened risk in any given country or by the wanton recklessness of speculators on the world's stock markets.

There must be a discussion very soon about the nature and the new role of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and of the necessary adjustments thereto, because these bodies were created in a context quite different from that of today and clearly have been overwhelmed by the events of recent years, which could not be prevented. Their structure, their resources, their philosophy and their *modus operandi* were severely criticized since the 1980s in Latin America and in the Assembly, and today they have shown themselves to be unable to contain the impact of the current crisis. We have globalized the crises of poverty and unemployment. Let us also globalize the commitment to solve them.

By virtue of the universal nature of this body, by virtue of the terms of the Charter of San Francisco and because it is here that the concerns and problems of the States Members of this supreme world Organization should be set forth, I must once again raise what is well known as Bolivia's maritime problem.

Almost 120 years ago, in a military confrontation not of its own making, Bolivia lost a long strip of coastline on the Pacific Ocean. Our country thus lost, temporarily, its maritime status, its sovereign access to the sea — an essential condition of its existence — as well as its geopolitical role and status as a bridge between the great basins of South America.

The economic damage wrought by this loss was immense. I will not take time here today to mention the value of the minerals and fishing resources of this territory, as it is incalculable. Suffice it to recall that recent studies have shown that the cost of the landlocked condition of my country is estimated at $4 billion every 10 years, an amount equal to that of our foreign debt.

However, perhaps the most serious consequence of this ill-fated event was that my country was condemned to be penned in behind the Andes, far removed from the mainstream of the passage of goods, peoples and cultures, which are the very lifelines of the development of nations. Therefore, ever mindful of the magnitude of the damage, my country never accepted this status of isolation imposed upon us. We have unceasingly called for this injustice to be redressed, but in doing so we have abided by our tradition as peaceful people that rejects conflicts. However, our voices never fell silent.

We sought bilateral negotiations with Chile and brought our case to international forums.

On various occasions, the bilateral negotiations concluded with agreements or concrete proposals for a solution whose main objective was the return to Bolivia of its sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean, with a coastline, a port of its own and an overland link. For reasons that I shall not go into now, these dealings were never concluded and were added to the long list of lost opportunities on the record of relations between our countries.

Bolivia's cause has always been met with the sympathy and understanding of the international community. There have been numerous expressions of such solidarity. I would just like to refer to two, one in the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement and the other in that of the Organization of American States (OAS). I will state only the relevant portion of the resolution adopted by the ninth General Assembly of the Organization of American States, which was held in La Paz in 1979. That resolution states, in its operative part that,

> "it is in the inherent interest of our hemisphere to find an equitable solution whereby Bolivia can obtain sovereign and effective access to the Pacific Ocean"

as part of a proposal aimed at,

> "securing, in a spirit of fraternity and integration of the Americas, the objective referred to in the previous paragraph and to consolidate a stable peace which would stimulate economic and social progress in the region of the Americas directly affected by the consequences of Bolivia's landlocked condition."

In spite of everything, the problem still awaits a solution. It is a kind of throwback to another time, another logic, another way of seeing relations between neighbouring nations. This has left an indelible mark on the memory of my country. I must therefore state emphatically before the Assembly that Bolivia will never back down from its demand and that it will not be discouraged by how long its efforts may take. Bolivia has the staying power and limitless patience of an ancient people and knows that the time is sure to come when this long-standing issue will be definitively resolved. Our hope becomes conviction when we see how other nations find ways of unravelling the Gordian knot of conflicts at least as complex as our own.

The case made by President Hugo Banzer last year in the Assembly is still valid. He recently put it again to the twelfth presidential summit of the Rio Group in the following terms:

> "There is no subject which cannot be discussed, if it is approached in good faith, without preconceptions or prejudices. The subjects of peace, security and democracy are not items reserved for diplomats and specialists. All the institutions of society have an opinion to voice and ideas to contribute. These are voices which must be heard and heeded. I would therefore like to propose that wherever there is open conflict between our nations or where the embers of ancient conflicts still smoulder, let us call upon our citizens to help us find the path to solutions. Let us throw open the windows of Latin American diplomacy and let in the fresh air of new opinions and the sound of new voices. Only recently I made the same point by suggesting that Bolivians and Chileans meet together and talk about the vast potential of our relationship and find a way of removing the obstacles which block its path. I am repeating this here today, because I am convinced that we must find a way of breaking with the status quo. We cannot bind ourselves to the inheritance of other times and other problems."

It could not be clearer that now is the time for economic integration and a political solution for access to the ocean, not for confrontations. The nature of the global system requires the formation of large-scale spaces in which ideas and goods can move freely, where common institutions can be built and where new cultures can be nurtured, the fruit of the mingling of diverse peoples. If this is true anywhere, it is true in Latin America.

In order to clear the path along these major highways, we must remove the obstacles that are blocking or hindering the march towards integration. In the case of relations between Bolivia and Chile, this means resolving the age-old disputes which led to the breaking off of diplomatic relations at the end of the 1970s. The liberalization of trade, agreements on economic complementarity and arrangements for free transit are all essential parts of this picture, but not the whole picture.

For this to happen, what is needed is vision and courage on both sides. If we want to find new, different solutions in keeping with the times, we can no longer remain mired in the juridical, diplomatic and military logic of the past. If we want to find answers, we may have to move outside those circles that have traditionally handled these matters up to now. This is the sense of the proposal of President Banzer: to bring businessmen, workers, churches, professionals and the peoples of Bolivia and Chile into the dialogue.

Of course, the international community has a crucial role to play in the search for agreement. The counsel, guidance and help of friendly countries within the framework of the subregional integration processes in which they are engaged may just be the missing factor needed to get dialogue going, to bring diplomats to the negotiating table, to make leaders shoulder their historical responsibilities and to reach a solution bringing our peoples together. My country is convinced that the underlying problems must be dealt with because we know that integration will be consolidated only when economic agreements guarantee that it will be sustained by the political will and confidence of our nations.

There are many initiatives that should not be left only on paper. Last June, during the special session devoted to the drug problem, important proposals were made. Bolivia put forth the idea of creating a body, similar to a consultative group, made up of countries that would help finance the high cost of the fight against drug-trafficking. We would like to know what steps have been taken to implement this, as well as the other initiatives that were proposed in that highly important specialized forum.

The phenomenon of corruption, which is no stranger to most countries represented here, is a disease that spreads and damages our institutional structures, saps the legitimacy of democracy, distorts the economy, creates bad habits in public administration and erodes morality.

In compliance with a presidential order, last 21 September we had the honour of celebrating at a solemn ceremony the signing of an accord among the principal institutions of the State representing the three branches of power, whereby the National Integrity Plan came into effect. This Plan establishes a comprehensive strategy to combat corruption. The judicial basis for the Plan is taken from the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, which was signed by the member States of the OAS in 1996 and which Bolivia was the first nation to ratify as the law of the land.

After careful thought, we have made this policy one of the highest priorities of the Government of Bolivia. We have begun to put into effect the first concrete measures to combat this evil and to make this proposal State policy. We now invite the international community to follow our endeavour closely and to support our initiative.

Bolivia vigorously adheres to all the statements that have repudiated terrorism, a despicable practice that has no justification whatsoever. It will support any initiative or action that may be put forth to fight it.

In another area, we wish to underline the Secretary-General's task in the process of the reform of the United Nations. We believe that there has been progress in the efforts to reduce bureaucracy, rationalize expenses and avoid duplication in the work of the United Nations. We also believe that it would be healthy to enhance the Economic and Social Council in order to turn it into an economic, social, scientific and technological council. It would also be worthwhile to create a council for humanitarian affairs responsible for social problems of our time, such as poverty, unemployment, discrimination and all forms of exclusion.

We meet every year to express our concerns and thoughts, to share experiences and reaffirm our faith in the purposes and principles of the San Francisco Charter. Each year, we would like to see positive advances in the solution of problems, in joint responses to crises, in the spread of peace on the world map. Thus, the United Nations will continue to grow even stronger. Bolivia wishes, as always, to contribute to the achievement of those goals.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, His Excellency Mr. Talbak Nazarov.

Mr. Nazarov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): First allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the crucial post of President of the General Assembly and to wish you success in guiding the work of this important forum.

The example of Tajikistan clearly demonstrates the fruitfulness of close cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in peacekeeping activities and highlights the need for the international community to implement a coordinated strategy to support the efforts of the Government and people of a country to resolve crises, overcome instability and find ways to achieve lasting peace, national reconciliation and prosperity. We welcome the key role played by the United Nations in coordinating this multifaceted work.

I would like once again to express my profound gratitude to all Members of the General Assembly and the Security Council and to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for their growing and multifaceted support for the peace process in Tajikistan and for their overall unflagging attention to our problems, which, regrettably, remain acute.

We commend the efforts of all States and international organizations that are acting as guarantors of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan signed on 27 June last year in Moscow and reached with the assistance of the United Nations. During the almost five years they were stationed on the territory of Tajikistan, the collective peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States, by their presence and practical actions, helped stabilize the situation in our country and helped us continue to pursue the complex inter-Tajik political dialogue. This has led to the implementation of the historic agreements that resulted from these talks.

We express our deep appreciation to all our friends — countries and international organizations, and in particular United Nations agencies — that empathize with the people of Tajikistan in their hardships and are trying to help them overcome them as soon as possible.

While paying due tribute to the United Nations for its contribution to the strengthening of peace and national reconciliation in Tajikistan, we are fully aware that the primary responsibility for restoring peaceful life in our country and for the future of our motherland lies with the leadership of the Republic of Tajikistan and with the Tajik opposition.

We believe that the peace process in Tajikistan, though arduous, is becoming more established and is moving towards national accord. This is born out by the fact that the work of the Commission on National Reconciliation has definitely entered a constructive phase. The majority of refugees and displaced persons have returned home. The process of reintegrating the United Tajik Opposition armed formations into the Government military structures has begun. The majority of the participants in the military and political resistance movement have been granted amnesty and released from prison. All prisoners of war have been released. Virtually all the leaders of the Opposition forces have returned to the country and are living and working in Dushanbe. Representatives of the Opposition have been appointed to a number of important Government posts. A process is under way to bring the nation's laws up to date with the new needs of political life in Tajikistan. A number of other serious measures have also been implemented.

Guided by the vital aspirations of the people and recognizing that there is no viable alternative to full and timely implementation of the Tajikistan General Agreement, the country's leadership is determined to continue to do all it can to ensure speedy implementation of all the provisions of the General Agreement.

We are grateful for the empathy for our problems shown by the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Tajikistan, Mr. Gerd Dietrich Merrem, who completed his work in May this year. We are prepared to build on this positive experience of cooperation in our relations with his successor, Mr. Jan Kubisz.

Tajikistan has great respect for the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) and for all its staff. These brave and noble people are serving a lofty goal under difficult conditions and are making a valuable contribution to the attainment of national accord and the establishment of peace and tranquillity in our country.

The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan reaffirms its desire to continue to closely cooperate with the United Nations in implementing the peace accords and in the post-conflict reconstruction of the country. We have taken decisive action to prevent excesses similar to the tragic death this past July of four UNMOT officers, and to provide better security for all personnel of international organizations present in Tajikistan.

While in no way diminishing the United Nations obvious achievements in organizing collective international responses to crisis situations in various regions of the world, we feel obliged to draw attention once again to the dangerous, protracted Afghan conflict, which remains unresolved. We have particular reason for highlighting this problem — above all because we feel profound sympathy for the continuing sufferings of the fraternal people of Afghanistan. Moreover, we, together with our nearest neighbours and Russia, are very seriously concerned about the dangers posed by the situation in Afghanistan, which threatens to destabilize the entire Central Asian region; to lead to a massive and spontaneous exodus of Afghan refugees across the border into Tajikistan; and to spread terrorism, arms and drugs. We are especially alarmed about the threat of the proliferation of religious extremism, and are joining forces with Russia and Uzbekistan to counter it. Since the inter-Tajik reconciliation process has not been completed, all these factors are impacting very negatively on the situation in our country.

As the history of Afghanistan shows, the use of force by any internal or external actors not only is incapable of solving the problems of Afghan society, but is fraught with the danger of a new escalation of civil war in that country. In this context, we cannot but feel alarmed at developments in Afghanistan, in particular the open disregard for the efforts of the international community to find a political solution to the conflict and for the Afghan people's desire to preserve the integrity of their State.

We, together with the other members of the Almaty Five, are closely following developments in the Islamic State of Afghanistan. Tajikistan fully supports the United Nations playing a central role in coordinating all international efforts to find an Afghan settlement. As a member of the group of neighbours and friends of Afghanistan, the Six plus Two group, we are firm in our opposition to any external interference in the affairs of Afghanistan, including interference in the form of sending military personnel and arms to that country.

The Republic of Tajikistan notes the important role played by the United Nations in disarmament and in a whole range of problems related to strengthening non-proliferation regimes with regard to weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. In this context, we are joining the initiative of our neighbours to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. We believe the establishment of such a nuclear-free zone requires, first and foremost, action on the part of prospective parties to that treaty. We need to consider such questions as the

definitive geographical configuration of this zone; the substance and range of guarantees granted to the parties by the nuclear Powers; how to deal with any transporting of nuclear weapons through such a zone; verification measures; and other matters.

Our position on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia cannot overlook the fact that India and Pakistan have conducted nuclear tests. We fully support the urgent appeal of the Security Council to India and Pakistan to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We believe that both these countries — along with the overwhelming majority of members of the international community — must choose the path of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The evolution of the world economy today is characterized by increasing globalization and liberalization. This is reflected in the growing interdependence and greater openness of national economies and of commodity and financial markets — a development that is beginning to have both positive and negative impacts.

We share the view that, in addition to national efforts to increase their economic and social potential, developing countries and those in transition need the consolidated support of the international community, including that of the United Nations and other multilateral institutions.

Above all, we have in mind two things: first, the creation of favourable international conditions so as to provide open access to markets, as well as to financial resources and modern technology; secondly, assistance in overcoming poverty, protecting the environment, implementing economic reforms and enhancing the competitiveness of national enterprises. Unless we resolve these problems, it will be impossible to fully integrate countries in transition into the world economy.

For Tajikistan those matters are all the more relevant given that our country has many outstanding problems caused by the prolonged period of military confrontation, as well as challenges directly related to its peaceful settlement. They include the humanitarian needs of rather large and vulnerable segments of the country's population — needs for food, medicine and health care. Vital infrastructure, in particular for water supply and sanitation, needs to be rehabilitated. And, finally, assistance is needed to help refugees and displaced persons return home, and to demobilize and reintegrate the Tajik Opposition fighters into civilian life.

The leadership of Tajikistan is doing all it can to deal with the country's humanitarian crisis caused by the internal conflict, to rebuild the basic elements of the national economy and to make progress in transforming it into a socially oriented market economy. However, these efforts will be insufficient without the assistance of many countries and international organizations, including the humanitarian agencies of the United Nations system and the charitable funds. In this regard, we note in particular the work of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Tajikistan, who is responsible for coordinating international aid to Tajikistan for its post-conflict reconstruction and further sustainable development.

We hope that at this fifty-third session there will be broad support for a resolution that fully reflects Tajikistan's needs at this difficult stage in its development, including the tasks related to implementation of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in our country.

We have gratefully acknowledged the consolidated appeal drawn up by United Nations agencies to meet the humanitarian needs of the Tajik people for 1998. This appeal clearly defined the priorities and set the minimum amount of external aid required. We would be grateful to donors if, reflecting the spirit of support for the peace process in Tajikistan expressed at the Vienna meeting of donors in October last year and at the Paris conference held in May this year, they would meet the goals of this appeal.

We attach great importance to continuing our cooperation with institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which are seeking to provide assistance during the post-conflict reconstruction and development of the Tajik economy. We hope that in the near future this cooperation will further expand.

Tajikistan consistently supports various United Nations efforts to protect the environment. As a predominantly mountainous country, Tajikistan sees particular relevance in increasing the attention paid by the international community to the preservation of biological diversity and natural mountain ecosystems. In this connection, we actively supported the proposal of the Kyrgyz Republic to declare the year 2000 the

International Year of the Mountain. We were one of the co-sponsors of the relevant draft resolution, which we hope will be adopted by consensus at this session.

We are inspired and encouraged by the growing interest of the United Nations in helping to solve the environmental problems faced by our country and other countries of Central Asia. In our view, one of the most serious ecological challenges posed not only to Tajikistan but to almost all the countries of the region is to eliminate the potential threat of the major natural disasters that could occur if no effective action is taken to normalize the situation in the area of Lake Sarez, which lies 3,263 metres above sea level and contains 17 billion tonnes of water. This poses a grave danger not only for the people of Tajikistan but also for neighbouring Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, which could sustain serious damage in the event of a breakage of the natural dam that was formed at the beginning of this century as a result of an earthquake. We count on our renewed cooperation with the United Nations for help in dealing with this problem in a comprehensive manner.

Among the many problems on the United Nations agenda, we would like to stress the issue of combating the drug menace, whose deleterious impact, unfortunately, has not bypassed our country. We fully support the coordinating role of the United Nations in the mobilization of the international community's efforts in this area. We note the usefulness and timeliness of the convening in June this year of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to this issue.

Tajikistan, together with its closest neighbours, is taking active steps to halt illicit drug trafficking. It is broadening its cooperation with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. As is well known to those who have observed the situation in one of our neighbouring countries, "narcodollars" create fertile soil for terrorism and illicit drugs and arms trafficking. We view terrorism in all its forms and manifestations as a grave crime against humanity. The Government of the Republic of Tajikistan vigorously condemns the acts of violence that have been committed recently in certain countries. We call upon the United Nations and its Members to declare merciless and uncompromising war on terrorism all over the world.

Tajikistan supports the steps being taken by the Secretary-General to reform the entire United Nations system to enable it to serve better in a new environment, and to deal with different issues without undermining the foundation of its activities. This point must be taken into account when dealing with expansion of the membership of the Security Council, so that this important body can continue effectively and expeditiously to discharge its primary responsibility under the United Nations Charter: the maintenance of international peace and security.

We are confident that the joint efforts of Members to reform the Organization will lead to a renewal which will preserve its universal character and its ability to adequately meet current and future challenges.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Saint Lucia, His Excellency The Honourable George Odlum.

Mr. Odlum (Saint Lucia): Mr. President, it is such a pleasure that a distinguished son of our region should preside over these proceedings. We wish you well and pledge our full support.

This year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the birth of a Declaration which was predicated on the assumption that the right to development is a human right. The golden jubilee of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could not have occurred at a more timely juncture in the history of international affairs. Article 23 of the Declaration insists that everyone has the right to work, the free choice of employment and protection against unemployment. Article 28 boasts that everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

However, the trends that shape the international order today, the issues that are affecting the destiny of States, are running counter to the spirit of that Declaration, and are, in fact, threatening and hindering that right to development so nobly expressed 50 years ago.

As the world enters the dawn of a new millennium, the phenomenon of globalization characterizes the new international order. There is no escaping the reality that globalization is today a fact of life: the integration and interlocking of systems of production, finance and capital and trade, and liberalized markets that have shunned national boundaries and have produced remarkable wealth and economic growth.

But there is an almost ominous ring about the word "globalization". It gobbles up the small plankton of countries which cannot adjust to the frenzy of the market. Globalization has not been all about wealth and prosperity for all the nations of the world. For billions of people in the developing world, it has used them and bypassed them, when in reality, globalization should be about development for all.

The 1997 United Nations Development Programme report confirms that only a few fortunate countries had benefited from globalization. Those countries which have shared in the rapidly expanded world trade have seen their own trade become a larger proportion of their gross domestic product. But for 44 developing countries, with more than a billion people, this key ratio had been falling over the previous decade. Yes, the growth in financial flows has been rapid, but its circulation has been predominantly in the capital markets of the developed world, while investment flows have coursed through only a few developing countries.

The Asian Tiger economies, which had achieved amazing levels of development and growth in a short space of time, had been held up as models for the new age of global free markets. However, the collapse of these economies in 1997, coming three years after the Mexican case, has reinforced fears that globalization has made the world economy more volatile and more unstable. That even such star performers would be battered so severely suggests that vulnerability has increased significantly with globalization. Foreign money can flee as quickly as it comes in and leave countries in deep trouble.

Saint Lucia is one of those countries caught up on the dizzy Ferris wheel of globalization, without the luxury of the choice of being able to jump off or determine how the wheel spins. Trade liberalization, the twin of globalization, has not been kind to us, and the midwife of trade liberalization — the World Trade Organization (WTO) — has dealt us an even more unkind cut.

Last year, the head of our Government, Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony, in his address to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, complained of the impact on Saint Lucia and the Caribbean of a ruling by the WTO with respect to the European banana marketing regime. That ruling, which was instigated by a few complainant countries from the Americas, has the capacity to lead to the social and economic destruction of a number of small States in the Caribbean, like Saint Lucia, for which bananas are a major vital export commodity. That ruling tears at the heart of our development process, as it can take away from us a system which allows us a preferential market for a crop which is the backbone of our economy.

Developing countries and many renowned jurists have criticized the process pursued by the WTO in this case, but what was equally worrying is that the panel did not take into account the developmental, social and environmental impact of the implementation of this ruling. The WTO is not only to be a trade policeman, but is supposed to contribute to improving standards of living.

Following the ruling by the WTO last year, that the banana marketing regime was incompatible with its regulations, the European Union had been trying to amend the regime. The objective was not only to make it WTO-compatible, but at the same time, to preserve the kind of access it gave us to the European market — an access essential for our economic development. Earlier this year the European Union accepted amendments to the banana regime which we are all convinced make it WTO-compatible. We, the banana-producing countries of the Caribbean, may have wished that some of the provisions now adopted were different, but we are satisfied that the new regime allows us the opportunity to continue to survive in the market place and sustain our development largely through our own efforts.

The European Union retained the special safeguards of Lomé to enable us to market our bananas; and with the Lomé Convention now in receipt of a WTO waiver, we thought that we had been given the breathing space we needed for orderly reform and diversification and for adjustment to the new realities of globalization. But, despite this, the United States and a group of Central American countries are continuing an onslaught against our banana industry.

One year after our Prime Minister appealed to this body for good sense and sensitivity to prevail in the settling of world trade disputes, in the consideration by international institutions of the plight of the disadvantaged, and in the conduct of strong and powerful countries towards smaller and poorer ones, we return to tell the Assembly that those who should have heeded this appeal seem to have chosen not to hear it.

The pursuit of this banana policy by the United States and the Central American countries will expose the economies of the Caribbean to severe and possibly irreparable damage. This is a violation of our right to

development — a right that the United Nations recognized as an inalienable human right when it adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development at the 97th plenary meeting of the forty-first session of the General Assembly on 4 December 1986. One year ago, our Prime Minister, before this Assembly, called upon the United States of America to re-examine its policies towards the Caribbean, particularly its lead role in the challenge to the banana marketing regime. We are now engaged in a dialogue with the United States hoping to avert a reconvening of the World Trade Organization dispute panel. Once again we urge the United States and the other complainant countries to apply the spirit of cooperation and consultation to this situation so that we can find a mutually acceptable solution to what they perceive to be the problems.

Globalization must not be used by powerful States as an excuse to condemn us to a permanent state of underdevelopment and poverty. Already the rich nations of the world appear to be using globalization as an excuse for their withdrawal from active engagement in the battle against poverty.

The scourge of poverty is not new, neither has it ever been acceptable. What is unacceptable is that given all the strides we have made this century in science and technology, in the creation of vast oceans of wealth, we at the same time have failed to reduce the levels of poverty around the world.

Many people have enjoyed the benefits of supersonic aircraft, 200-mile-per-hour trains, satellite telephones, global television, the Internet and 24-hour markets. Yet, in the same world and at the same time, there are millions who have never ridden in a motor vehicle, used a telephone, switched on an electric light or had pipe-borne water; millions wholly unfamiliar with such everyday amenities as refrigerators and television sets; millions who cannot read or write; millions of children who do not go to school; millions of infants who do not get enough food to survive.

A more vigorous effort to eliminate extreme deprivation should surely be a high priority for the new millennium. Saint Lucia believes this should be achieved by the end of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty — by the year 2006.

Economic progress in recent decades has lifted large numbers out of acute poverty, and success on this front has been particularly notable in the populous country of China. But there is no evidence yet that globally there has been a decline in the number of those classified as "absolute poor": people whose incomes never rise above the dollar-a-day threshold. These are reckoned to amount to 1.3 billion people, or one in every three persons in the developing world. Nearly three fourths of these people live in Asia, but the highest proportion of very poor people is in Africa. The 1997 report of the United Nations Development Programme states that the total figure appears to be rising with population growth, except in South-East Asia and the Pacific. But this was written before the economic typhoon that battered such South-East Asian countries as Indonesia in 1998, impoverishing many millions of people in that region, and before the serious floods in China had dispossessed so many people.

Yet most countries have failed to lift their aid towards the level of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product — the internationally agreed target set several decades ago. In fact, aid from the G-7 countries fell in 1997 to just 0.19 per cent of their collective gross national product.

The necessity for the rich countries to understand that the new international order of globalization does not consider the special circumstances of small States is emphasized by the vulnerability of these small States to other elements, such as natural disasters. The extreme vulnerability of small island States, like Saint Lucia, was graphically illustrated only last week in the Caribbean. In just a few hours Hurricane Georges created havoc and destruction in the northern islands of the Caribbean — Saint Kitts and Nevis, Antigua and Barbuda, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and others. In any one island, at least two decades of economic development were blown away by two hours of storm. That is the extent of the economic vulnerability of these islands. As they struggle to rebuild their economies, as their people try to reorganize their lives again, we appeal to the Member States of the United Nations to be generous in coming forward with assistance for their redevelopment efforts.

In a world of an international order that is uncompromising for small States, of inadequate attention to the plight of the poor and to the harsh destructive forces of Mother Nature, it is the United Nations that must become a beacon and a haven for the small and the powerless, for the hungry and the disadvantaged. It is in the United Nations that they must find hope and comfort, answers and solutions to their problems. For this, however, there must be a United Nations that is as sensitive to the danger inherent in small-State

vulnerability as it is to the horrors of nuclear warfare, biological and chemical weapons and international terrorism. International terrorism can take many forms. To destroy a country's economic base and thrust its people into the slow death of unemployment, poverty and despair is as horrendous as the instant killing of its citizens by a bomb blast.

While we support the call for a strong abhorrence of international terrorism, we must deplore equally abhorrent acts of unilateral counter-terrorism. Such actions violate the culture of peace and consensus which the United Nations strives to inculcate.

There must be a United Nations with a greater commitment to upholding and fulfilling the tenets of article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development. There must therefore be further reform of the United Nations to make it more democratic and more appreciative of the voices of the majority, rather than the power of the minority. Saint Lucia therefore supports the call by the Secretary-General for continued urgent reform of the United Nations, provided that it leads to a fairer, more caring and more equitable institution.

Saint Lucia also strongly supports the statement delivered by Indonesia on behalf of the G-77 at the high-level dialogue on globalization held here recently and the growing consensus that there is urgent need for global governance of financial and trade matters. Indeed, because of its universal membership and success in promoting international cooperation for development, the United Nations is the best vehicle to foster agreement on standards, norms and regulations for the new financial order of the twenty-first century.

The building of a new international financial architecture for the twenty-first century cannot be done piecemeal or by a few exclusive States. It requires global participation, coordinated by the United Nations. Saint Lucia therefore calls for a global conference to address this issue similar to that held on matters pertaining to the environment, population and housing.

But reform must not be confined only to the United Nations. In a world of trade liberalization which is not friendly to small States, the guardian of the free market process must itself be reformed. Saint Lucia therefore reiterates its call, first made to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly last year, for reform of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and in particular its dispute-settlement procedures. A revisiting of the WTO began in Singapore, where developing countries had to assert the limits of WTO interventionism.

What is additionally required of the WTO now was outlined by Prime Minister Mr. Kenny Anthony when, in his capacity as Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), he addressed the recent meeting of heads of State of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban, South Africa. He said:

> "More generally, the WTO must now take urgent steps to implement the agreement at Singapore, for a special regime for the least developed countries and those who share the characteristics of fragility. It is time that values like fairness and equity asserted their legitimacy in the ethically neutral world of globalization and liberalization."

Saint Lucia firmly believes that despite the actions of developed countries, we in the developing world can ourselves assert and protect our right to development if we engage in greater cooperation among ourselves. We in the Caribbean have for years been engaged in an integration movement which has strengthened our capacity to deal with the challenges of international relations. Indeed, this year Saint Lucia was proud to be the host nation for the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Treaty of Chaguaramas, which created the Caribbean Community.

As we embark on the next quarter of a century, Saint Lucia pledges to work for even greater union in the Caribbean Community and closer association between all the countries of the Caribbean Sea. It is for this reason that Saint Lucia welcomes the recent initiatives that have brought Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti into a closer relationship with CARICOM as we seek to forge a new partnership with the European Union. In this connection, Saint Lucia calls for the understanding that Cuba is a Caribbean country and that closer relations with other Caribbean countries is a natural evolution which must not be perceived as being hostile to the interests of extraregional Powers. We call too for the lifting of the economic embargo against Cuba and for its reintegration into the inter-American system. It is only through dialogue and consultation, not through conflict and hostility, that problems are permanently solved.

Saint Lucia also welcomes the recent meeting in Durban between the Caribbean Community and the Southern African Development Community, which laid the basis for the future strengthening of relations between

the two regions. We applaud also the decision by the heads of State of the Non-Aligned Movement to hold a South-South summit and their decision to convene a standing ministerial committee for economic cooperation in 1999, to address the challenges and opportunities of globalization.

Our efforts to realize our right to development can enjoy fulfilment only if they take place in an atmosphere of world peace and harmony. We cannot prevent nuclear genies from popping out of bottles unless we destroy all the bottles with a treaty designed to eliminate all nuclear armaments. The existence of exclusive nuclear clubs is an open invitation to nations which are excluded.

We in the Caribbean continue to call for the Caribbean to be recognized as a zone of peace. We also call for respect and support of the initiative of CARICOM for the Caribbean Sea to be declared a special area in the context of sustainable development. Saint Lucia, therefore, like other Caribbean States, continues to register its opposition to the use of the Caribbean Sea for the trans-shipment of nuclear waste by some great Powers. While some of those Powers can sustain a nuclear accident, given their size and population, a small island of a few hundred thousand people certainly cannot. The best guarantee we can obtain against a nuclear accident in the Caribbean Sea as a result of the trans-shipment of nuclear waste is not the assurances of the countries engaged in the practice, but a halt to the practice itself.

As we call for international recognition of our right to determine what kind of place we wish our region to be, and as we assert our inalienable human right to development and call upon others to respect that right by withdrawing their challenge to the lifeblood of our economy, we urge the rich nations to recognize the insensitivity of globalization, and we ask the international community to take as an example that great international leader, President Nelson Mandela. As we seek to establish a new, more humane international order for the coming millennium, an order that will truly reflect the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, let us remember the moral leadership that he has given us. Nelson Mandela taught us that holding steadfast to principle and insisting on justice can produce change even in the most intransigent of systems.

The world has become a global neighbourhood, and we must insist on living by brotherly principles and values. The focus for moral leadership might have shifted to the developing world, with Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro as the twin peaks of international inspiration. It is their lifelong struggle for human rights that must become the touchstone for our developmental goals in this anniversary year.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.